

Writers, both classic and contemporary, know the importance of the introduction. The following samples may be shared with students to illustrate the hook.

To the red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth.

The Grapes of Wrath (John Steinbeck)

Jean: Miss Julie's mad again to-night: absolutely mad!

Miss Julie (August Strindberg)

Whenever my mother talks to me, she begins the conversation as if we were already in the middle of an argument.

The Kitchen God's Wife (Amy Tan)

Three weeks after Granny Blakeslee died, Grandpa came to our house for his early morning snort of whiskey, as usual, and said to me, "Will Tweedy? Go find yore mama, then run up to yore Aunt Loma's and tell her I said git on down here. I got something to say. And I ain't a-go'n say it but once't."

Cold Sassy Tree (Olive Ann Burns)

I sit on the bed at a crooked angle, one foot on the floor, my hip against the tent of Mom's legs, my elbows on the hospital table. My skirt is too short and keeps riding up my thighs.

A Yellow Raft in Blue Water (Michael Dorris)

We are planning a party, a very special party, the women and I. My name is Miriam, and this is where I live. Hut 18, bed 22.

Let the Celebrations Begin!
(Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas)

And they lived happily after after.

Dacey's Song (Cynthia Voigt)

"Hold on, boy!" A harsh voice called to him from the dim light on Brattle Street. He held himself in and managed to sound calm when he asked, "What do you want of me?"

Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave (Virginia Hamilton)

Minilesson 3

Transparency

EXAMPLE LEADS AND CONCLUSION

1. A Lesson Learned

Lead:

Getting a driver's license is a rite of passage every teenager in America looks forward to, and I was no exception.

Conclusion:

When you see a young girl on the road, I advise you to pull over and let her have the rite of passage.

2. Creating a Frame

Lead:

Every Halloween Jason Scott sits in his rocking chair, waiting for the doorbell to ring. He brings out a bucket of candy and puts a handful in each child's bucket.

Conclusion:

I'll bet this next Halloween, Jason Scott will be handing out candy in heaven.

-Justen Murdock

3. Action

Lead:

I slid hard into first base, and held my breath, waiting for the umpire to make his call. "He's out!"

Conclusion:

The throbbing pain in my leg was almost too much to bear. A few guys from the other team picked me up and carried me to Dad's car. After my dad got in and shut his door, I cried, "I am safe."

-Brian Pearce

4. Drawstring

Lead:

Jerry grasped the cold rock in his gloved hand, and carefully raised his foot to a small rock ledge. He tried to grasp another rock, but his numb fingers refused.

Conclusion:

The mountain, a taunting peak, had been conquered. Jerry had scaled the mountain using his physical skill, mental toughness, and unerring determination. He had won the battle.



Modeling by Writing Leads

1. Choose a draft of your writing, one with an ordinary lead. Prepare an overhead transparency of that lead. Share it with the students.
2. Discuss the opener in your draft. Point out how ordinary it is, how it would not intrigue readers, how it is only one step away from "It was a dark and stormy night." Following is the one that was used with the sixth-grade students, discussed previously.

One day I was walking along the path in the woods on my way to Duck's Nest. I wasn't thinking much about anything until I got to the creek that serves as the mid-way point between home and my favorite swimming hole.

3. Together with students, rewrite that opener using a quotation, description, statement, dialogue, thoughts, or action.

Quotation

Ernest Hemingway once wrote, "The only thing that could spoil a day was people" and that's exactly what spoiled mine the day I walked the woods to Duck's Nest. I wasn't thinking ...

Description

The trees and bushes, looking like they had been smudged with giant emerald crayons, formed an aisle along the warm, loamy path to Duck's Nest. I wasn't thinking ...

Making a Statement

The woods on the way to Duck's Nest seemed safe enough. I wasn't thinking ...

Dialogue

"Hello," I called to the trees that lined the path to Duck's Nest, "Hello, birch. Hello, cypress. Hello willow." I wasn't thinking ...

Thoughts

Since I had challenged myself to walk the entire way through the woods to Duck's Nest without a thought, I wasn't thinking ...

Action

Running along the path to Duck's Nest would get me to there faster, but today I just lallygagged in the woods. I wasn't thinking ...